

Caring for Children by Caring for Their Mother

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION : Last year, at least 1850 babies were born in Canada to mothers who used opioids during pregnancy. Locally, 54 babies were identified that were at high-risk for contracting Hepatitis C due to, among other factors, intravenous drug use of the mother during pregnancy. Given these figures, a literature review was conducted to understand the impact this issue has on families and evaluate potential interventions. The objective of the current study was to delineate current findings related to the impacts of prenatal alcohol- and substance-use disorder on children and families and examine the efficacy of a program that has attempted to address this issue, the Parent-Child Assistance Program (PCAP).

METHODS: A literature review was conducted to identify the short and term impacts of alcohol- and substance-use disorder on children, mothers and families, and examine the efficacy of PCAP on mitigating these.

RESULTS: Women who experience poverty are at higher risk for alcohol- and substance-use-disorders which puts both the mother and her baby at risk for a number of social and health-related problems, especially if she is actively using these substances during pregnancy. Among one cohort of pregnant and postpartum women who suffer from addiction 89% came from homes where at least one parent had an alcohol- or substance-use-disorder; 63% had suffered physical/sexual abuse as a child; 23% had spent time in foster care; 58% had run away as a child; and 37% did not finish high school.

Interventions targeted at high-risk mothers with babies and young children are more likely to disrupt this cycle. PCAP is 3-year-program of tailored, in-home, structured, case management that has been shown to drastically improve the outcomes of mothers and their families in terms of addiction management, stable housing, maintaining or regaining guardianship of their children, reducing reliance on government assistance, and family planning.

CONCLUSIONS: PCAP has been shown to mitigate many of the social factors that perpetuate the cycle of addiction in marginalized families and should be considered in communities where this issue is prevalent.

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Abstract

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